

'Get-Away Pilot' Left Death Note

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and CY EGAN

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New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison hinted today that Lee Harvey Oswald was not the actual assassin of President Kennedy. "I have no reason to be-

lieve that Lee Harvey Oswald killed anyone in Dallas," Garrison said. "This is my personal feeling."

The prosecutor did not elaborate.

His cryptic statement was made as the World Journal Tribune learned in telephone

interviews the contents of an unsigned, undated note found in the apartment of David W. Ferrie, 48, a key figure in Garrison's investigation to prove conspiracy in the assassination.

The note, found on a dining room table of the dis-

ordered second-floor apartment where Ferrie, a pilot and self-described psychologist and private detective, lay dead in bed, stated in part:

"To leave this life is, for

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me a sweet prospect. I find nothing in it that is desirable, and on the other hand everything that is loathsome."

Despite the note—apparently in his own handwriting—mystery deepened over the time and circumstances of the death of Ferrie, who said Garrison had him "pegged as the get-away pilot in an elaborate plot to kill Kennedy."

While Garrison at first said he considered Ferrie's death a suicide, when pressed, he added:

"I am not ruling out murder. I'm not ruling out anything."

Garrison said "one of the

mysteries we don't understand" is the conflict over the time of Ferrie's death.

Dr. Nicholas Chetta, the coroner, said death—apparently due to a massive brain hemorrhage—had to be before 4 a.m. yesterday because of the rigor mortis condition of the body, which was found nude with a sheet pulled up to the chest. But George Lardner, a reporter for the Washington Post, said he was in the apartment until that hour interviewing Ferrie.

15 BOTTLES OF PILLS

Chetta said that 15 bottles of various pills were found in Ferrie's apartment, but none contained drugs other than

those used for vascular disease.

The coroner said Ferrie suffered from high blood pressure and a congenital weakness in a blood vessel at the base of his brain, which ruptured causing the fatal hemorrhage.

Ferrie also was variously quoted as telling friends recently that he was afflicted with emphysema (a choking lung disease) or encephalitis (sleeping sickness).

Chetta said Ferrie "had been under undue tension lately" and had voiced a desire to end his life to a male acquaintance two weeks ago. The coroner refused to divulge the name of the man.

But Garrison said Ferrie had expressed fear that his life was in danger and the prosecutor's office had planned to take him into custody early next week.

As Garrison expressed optimism that his investigation will eventually result in arrests and convictions despite Ferrie's death, the World Journal Tribune learned that he had sought the assistance of the Harris County district attorney's office in Houston, Tex.

The Houston prosecutor, it

was learned, advised Garrison that three men had stayed in a Houston motel on Nov. 22, 1963, the day of the assassination, and had telephoned Dallas.

Ferrie recently told newsmen that he had flown to Texas on the same day with two other men to "hunt geese" and that he stopped in Houston.

Ferrie claimed he had never known Oswald, despite a report that the accused assassin had served under him in a New Orleans Civil Air Patrol squadron.

Garrison said Ferrie, who was questioned by the FBI shortly after the assassination, figured in 40 pages of Warren Commission material, but 36 of these are classified secret.

'READY TO TALK'

The prosecutor said he believed Ferrie had been "ready to talk candidly," adding:

"Now he's gone and it will be much harder to make the

connections between certain people. But I'm sure we'll make them anyway."

Oswald's mother, Marguerite, said in Fort Worth, Tex., that she was astounded that Ferrie had never been questioned by the Warren Com-

mission, which contended son acted alone in the assassination.

"I'm shocked and dismayed that another life may have been forfeited for lack of thorough investigation," she said.

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This was the substance of a four-hour interview that I had with Ferrie, ending shortly before 4 a.m. yesterday.

At 11 a.m., just seven hours after I left Ferrie, his body was discovered with a sheet pulled up to his chest.

PARTING GESTURE

As if in a parting gesture, he said: "A president is no better than anyone else. If I were killed, I'd expect my death to be investigated just as thoroughly."

He then went back upstairs to his room, perhaps to prove the point.

Today New Orleans authorities are in disagreement over the cause of his death. Orleans Parish Coroner, Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, said Ferrie died of a ruptured blood vessel at the base of the brain. Garrison called it an apparent suicide.

Garrison declared that his investigators had intended to arrest Ferrie next week in the district attorney's highly publicized investigation of the death of Kennedy. Garrison has asserted that Kennedy's death in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, was the product of a plot hatched in New Orleans.

Garrison called Ferrie "one of history's most important individuals."

DELAYED ARREST

"Evidence developed by our office had long since confirmed that he was involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy," the district attorney said. He said that he decided only yesterday morning to hold off Ferrie's arrest another week.

Alone himself, Ferrie seemed in good spirits while we talked, not like a man about to kill himself.

"Kennedy is dead," he said. "Let's get on with living."

But he also described himself as moody, even, at one point as I recall it, given to manic-depressive moods.

A brown bottle of medicine, tablets apparently, was standing on the worn piano in his living room when I left. Garrison said 14 other bottles were found scattered around the house. Ferrie was reportedly suffering from emphysema.

It was Ferrie who forced Garrison to acknowledge Saturday that he was conducting a full-scale investigation of what Garrison called a conspiracy resulting in the Kennedy assassination.

Ferrie, 48, ruddy-faced, with

what appeared to be a deep red wig glued on his head and apparently false eyebrows, said: "I was the first one they questioned."

He had been summoned by Garrison's men last November on broadly the same grounds for which he had been picked up within 72 hours after Kennedy's assassination.

At that time he had been arrested as a "fugitive from Texas" and questioned about reports that he might have been in Dallas the afternoon of the assassination, waiting at Love Field with a plane to fly Oswald to safety.

Ferrie said he was sitting on a courthouse bench outside a federal district courtroom in New Orleans, "shooting the bull with a couple of federal agents," until a case he had been working on was completed at 3:20 p.m. that day.

"There wasn't even any charge against me in Texas to flee from," he said.

Ferrie said he did leave for Texas with several acquaintances after leaving the courthouse—to Galveston and Houston "hunting geese"—but that he never set foot in Dallas.

Ferrie said he never knew Oswald and had no recollection of ever having met him. Oswald was rumored to have served in Ferrie's Civil Air Patrol unit in New Orleans, but Ferrie said they were in different units.

Ferrie also was rumored to have flown Oswald to Cuba around 1959. He scoffed at the report.

"I've never even been to Cuba," he said. "At the time I was supposed to be flying Oswald to Cuba, I understand he was in the Marine Corps."

Ferrie said he considered "This pre-occupation" with the Kennedy assassination "ghoulish." But his rooms showed that it occupied him day and night.

Copies of magazine articles on the President's death, books attacking the Warren Commission, even his own mathematical calculations of the path of the assassin's bullet, cluttered the floor.

On Tuesday, he said, he had been at the public library reading the Warren Report.

He also had been conducting his own investigation to counter Garrison's.

TALKS TO EXILE

On Monday, he turned up at a restaurant near Canal Street to talk to Carlos Bringuier, a Cuban exile who had scuffled

with Oswald three years ago on a New Orleans street corner over Oswald's distribution of leaflets of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

Bringuier, who insists that the assassination was a pro-Castro conspiracy, recalled Ferrie's visit with distaste.

"He asked me if I could help him," Bringuier said. "He told me that anyone who thinks there could be a Communist plot behind the Kennedy assassination should go to a psychiatrist. That's the first time anybody ever sent me to a psychiatrist."

Pulling out a paper napkin as he was sitting in his restaurant, the Casa Cuba, Bringuier read off the questions Ferrie had asked of him:

1. Are any Americans or any Cubans that Oswald had any association with in New Orleans.

"2. If there is a conspiracy, when it started, the dates."

SHRUGS IT OFF

Bringuier, who went on the speaking circuit after the assassination with the Right-wing organization Christian Crusade, shrugged.

"There was a plot," he insisted, adding that he disagreed with Garrison's declaration earlier in the week that a foreign power was not involved.

In his apartment shortly before he died, Ferrie explained his own investigation by saying, "I'm just curious." He said he did not trust the courts or Garrison's investigation.

He said he was sure that the FBI had investigated Oswald's activities in New Orleans thoroughly and was now waiting for Garrison to fall on his face. The District Attorney said earlier in the week that "arrests will be made, convictions . . . obtained."

At the press conference after Ferrie's death, Garrison expressed his regret and suggested that the press may have driven Ferrie to take his own life.

Garrison said that his men had been keeping "a continuous stakeout" around Ferrie's apartment, 3330 Louisiana Ave. Parkway, "for a long period."

In response to questions, Garrison told reporter that the stakeout was not a round-the-clock surveillance, however. He said his men waited until "approximately 11 last night when he turned out all the lights."

The lights were on when I arrived around midnight. I could see Ferrie standing on

the second-floor porch as my cab pulled up.

Garrison said the stakeout as well as information gathered elsewhere "had caused us to become increasingly concerned, as our investigation progressed, about the possibility of his killing himself."

"We saw signs of extreme nervousness, endless pacing of the floor, comments to individuals in the last week or two relative to killing himself," Garrison said.

"At one point," the district attorney said, one unidentified

newsman to whom Ferrie had declined an interview shouted, "You may as well talk to us now. You're going to be arrested in a matter of days."

The district attorney said his office even put Ferrie up in a motel earlier this week, "at Ferrie's request," to give him some rest.

"We feel we knew him better than anyone else in the world," Garrison said. "There's no question about the fact it's a suicide."

Pressed on whether he was ruling out murder, however, Garrison told reporters, "I'm not ruling anything out. I don't want to be in the position of being dogmatic."

Ferrie's body was found by a man police refused to identify. Garrison said the individual had to break into the house to make the discovery.

INVESTIGATION GOES ON

The district attorney also vowed full speed ahead with his investigation of the Kennedy assassination. He said he had no intention of calling in the FBI. "What would be the purpose in seeking federal aid—to try and delay our progress three more years?"

"We've been able to make more progress in three months with a handful of men than they've been able to do in three years with 5,000 men," he said.

Garrison insisted that he wasn't trying to play "the dog that has to have its own bone" and added: "Any information the federal government has to give, of course we're glad to get." But he professed unhappiness with what he said was the "secret" classification stamped on pages in the Warren Commission volumes referring to Ferrie. He said the FBI had stamped them secret and implied that J. Edgar Hoover's men had been less than co-operative in other areas of the investigation as well.

DIFFERENT STORY

Ferrie had a different story.

He said that when he was summoned for questioning last fall, Garrison's men wanted him to track over the ground he had covered with them in 1963, claiming that the District Attorney's office had lost its copy of his initial statement.

At the press conference, Garrison complained specifically that the FBI never gave his office a copy of Ferrie's 1963 statement.

Ferrie said that when they told him what they wanted he responded that he would get a fresh copy of the statement for them from the FBI himself.

"They said, 'No, don't do that,'" Ferrie said. "I said I would. They said, 'Don't say we sent you.'"

Ferrie said that when he went to the FBI they immediately downgraded the request with the observation, "Oh, that's Jack Martin's stuff."

Martin, a courthouse hanger-on and apparently a self-appointed private investigator in New Orleans, was the man Ferrie blamed for getting the initial report, which resulted in his being picked up in 1963. Ferrie also blamed Martin, whose whereabouts are unknown, for triggering the Garrison investigation.

Ferrie, who had in the past been arrested on morals charges involving young boys, said he did have until recently his own doubts that Oswald was the only assassin. He referred to the "myriad of paperbacks" that came out last fall, around the time that Garrison began his investigation.

Ferrie said he was especially disturbed by the controversy over the autopsy report, suggesting that there must have been more than one rifle aimed route.

RESOLVES PROBLEM

He said he resolved the problem in his own mind only last Sunday when he realized that the position of bullets indicated in Kennedy's clothing and in his body on a morgue slab distorted their true points of entry and exit, since he was

sitting in an upright position in a limousine.

Alluding to the Garrison investigation that is apparently

pursuing many of the points raised by critics of the Warren Commission, Ferrie said, "I feel it's a thesis-proving affair. I think Garrison felt, what could be better than to be a hero on something that's popular?"

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